

ANNUAL DIVERSITY COUNCIL REPORT (YEAR 2003)

Council Members for year 2003:

Jeannie Bell-Nichols - Chairperson
Wanda Holliday - Vice Chairperson
Patricia Harris – Secretary

Samuel Arbes, Terry Blankenship-Paris (Alternate), Marguaree Branyon (OEEO), Diane Crawford, Latifa Elhadri, Jack Field, Veronica Godfrey (BIG), Ronald Herbert, Shu-Mei Huang, Bill Jirles (AFGE), Paul Johnson, Carolyn London (HRMB), Elizabeth Ney, Ted Outwater, David Perry, John Peterson, Willie Purdie, Gerard Roman (OEEO), Anna Lee Sabella, Dick Sloane, Molly Vallant (NIH Catalyst), Helen Watson (AFGE), and Larry Wright.

January:

The first meeting of the year was held on January 6, 2003. The Diversity Council mission statement was read and information was given on the purpose of the Council. This information is also available on the WEB at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/divcounc/>.

New officers were elected.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. program was held on January 16th. Dr. Ranaldo Lawson from the History Department at NCCU presented “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – The man behind the movement”, a perspective of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the decisions he made that influenced his life before becoming an activist.

February:

At the February 10th meeting, accessibility issues on the various NIEHS campuses creating problems for physically challenged employees and visitors were brought to the attention of the Council members. A subcommittee was formed to look into these concerns. Technical assistance for this project was provided by the Durham, NC office of NC Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Black History Month Observance was held on February 20th. Linguist, Dr. Walt Wolfram presented “Where Did Ebonics Come From? The Roots of African-American English.” Following Dr. Wolfram’s presentation, Greg Travlos’ gospel music group, the United Voices of Praise Gospel Choir gave a mini concert.

March:

Kathy Odenwald of the EEO office suggested that the Council work on other diversity-related projects during the months of June, July and August since there are no mandated celebrations for those months.

The Women's History Month program was held on March 27th. Donna Claycomb, Director of Admissions at the Duke Divinity School, was the guest speaker. This was the 2nd Annual Spirit Lecture. The NIEHS Diversity Council and the NIEHS Division of Intramural Research sponsored the event.

April:

The Clerical/Administrative/Secretarial/Technical program was held on May 1st. Forrest C. Greenslade, PH.D, DTM was the keynote speaker. Following his presentation, refreshments were served in the cafeteria before attendees returned to the conference rooms to participate in the seminar of their choice: resume writing or effective interviewing skills. The committee also received approval from OM to provide three on-the-spot awards for the winners of the essay contest. The winners were Kay Kaufman (OM), Jennifer Myers (DIR) and Sherry Weiss (NIHOD).

May:

The Asian/Pacific Islander program was held on May 29th. Dr. Richard K. Nakamura, Deputy Director of the National Institute of Mental Health at NIH, presented "Growing up Asian in America." A reception with entertainment by the Triangle Area Chinese American Society Youth Symphony followed Dr. Nakamura's presentation. The NIEHS cafeteria served entries throughout the month representative of the Asian/Pacific Islander cuisine.

June:

New ideas for initiatives were introduced to the Council after meetings with Dr. Olden and Selina Lee, Division of Complaints Management and Resolution at NIH. The three new committees were organized:

1) Team Building: to develop training for upper management that will increase sensitivity/ ability to relate to employees and develop an award for those in management and throughout NIEHS who exemplify specified characteristics

2) Obesity Awareness: to present obesity awareness. Areas to be focused on are psychological effects, health effects and social effects.

3) International Student Affairs: to set up an ongoing support network for International students during their time at NIEHS. There is a program in place through the NIEHS Trainees Assembly for visiting fellows. Orientation handbooks are available from Administrative Officers or through Barbara Curtis' office. Topics of concern to international students that need to be addressed include: language barrier issues, locating and purchasing homes or automobiles, local area schools for their children, etc. It was suggested that an email be sent to all current visiting fellows asking for volunteers who can be contacted by incoming visiting fellows to help guide them through setting up

residence and other relocation issues. An internal email list serve will be created to include visiting fellows and their native language.

July:

Committees continue to work on the upcoming fall celebrations. Members of the EEO office and Diversity Council, Dr. Birnbaumer, Dr. Schrader and Debbie Swope attended a presentation of the web-enabled mentoring program.

August:

Dr. Olden met with the Council at the August 11th meeting. He commended the Council on its' dedicated service to help make a difference in atmosphere and environment to devote diversity in the workplace. He was appreciative of the contributions made by the Council to put together programs and activities that give insight to the different cultures at NIEHS.

The EEO office sought volunteers to help during their participation in the Health and Public Safety Fair of "La Fiesta Del Pueblo, 2003" being held at the NC State Fairgrounds on September 6th and 7th.

September:

Molly Vallant, NIH Diversity Catalyst, attended a meeting at NIH on September 30th. The purpose of this meeting was to examine the Workplace Diversity Initiative and the Strategic plan for Diversity Management at the NIH. The basic principles of Diversity Management at the NIH and how we can work towards improving the process were discussed. At the meeting it was mentioned that on 10/15/03, Dr. Zerhouni would be receiving the 2003 Diversity Best Practices Award. This annual award is meant to recognize the achievements of organizations that work to ensure a culturally and ethnically diverse workforce. NIH, the only Federal government agency to be selected through a competitive process, joins nine other private sector organizations in receiving the award.

October:

The Hispanic Heritage program was held on October 2nd. Dr. Maria Gallardo-Williams was the guest speaker. She gave an informative presentation on lessons learned as a minority scientist. Following her presentation, the Venezuelan Dance Group and Semillitas Latinas provided entertainment. Diversity Council members provided food samples of Hispanic cuisine.

The Disability Awareness program was held on October 15th. Burn survivor, Frank Kingsley, Jr. presented a motivational program entitled, "Adversity: A Discussion of Options". Reception food was provided by the Life Experiences Bakery in Cary, a business that provides job opportunities to adults with disabilities.

November:

The Native American Heritage program was held on November 12th. Dr. Shoba Srinivasan spoke on the Native American grant opportunities here at NIEHS. Gwen Locklear provided a display of Native American crafts and members of the committee and other volunteers provided Native American food dishes for everyone to sample.

December:

The International Day celebration was held on December 19th following the NIEHS Awards Ceremonies. This year's theme, "Eat's a One-Der-Ful World!" Festival attendees enjoyed International arts and crafts, teas from around the world, gourmet international coffee, delicious International cuisines, handwriting, and origami demonstrations. A mix of entertainment included the NIEHS Band, belly dancers, Turkish drummer, singing, and dancing.

NIH Catalyst report: An information session was held to discuss the concerns expressed by biologists and chemists in the grades GS 9-12 regarding the promotion process. The questions addressed at the meeting and the summary of the meeting is included at the end of this document. As a follow-up to the meeting, Ms. Molly Vallant (NIH Catalyst) and Ms. Kathy Odenwald (EEO) met with Dr. Lutz Birnbaumer and gave him a summary of the meeting. He promised to bring the concerns to the attention of all Lab and Branch chiefs and also to try to set up a system that will facilitate the job of supervisors to review if their technical staff qualifies for promotions.